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President Reagan

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Ending Apartheid in South Africa

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Following is an addresss by President Reagan before members of the World Affairs Council and Foreign Policy Association in the East Room of the White House, Washington, D.C., July 22, 1986.

For more than a year now, the world's attention has been focused upon South Africa—the deepening political crisis there, the widening cycle of violence. And, today, I'd like to outline American policy toward that troubled republic and toward the region of which it is a part—a region of vital importance to the West.

The root cause of South Africa's disorder is apartheid—that rigid system of racial segregation, wherein black people have been treated as third-class citizens in a nation they helped to build.

America's view of apartheid has been, and remains, clear. Apartheid is morally wrong and politically unacceptable. The United States cannot maintain cordial relations with a government whose power rests upon the denial of rights to a majority of its people based on race. If South Africa wishes to belong to the family of Western nations, an end to apartheid is a precondition. Americans, I believe, are united in this conviction. Second, apartheid must be dismantled. Time is running out for the moderates of all races in South Africa.

But if we Americans are agreed upon the goal, a free and multiracial South Africa associated with free nations and the West, there is deep disagreement about how to reach it.

First, a little history—for a quarter century now, the American Government has been separating itself from the South African Government. In 1962, President Kennedy imposed an embargo on military sales. Last September, I issued an Executive order further restricting U.S. dealings with the Pretoria government. For the past 18 months, the marketplace has been sending unmistakable signals of its own. U.S. bank lending to South Africa has been virtually halted. No significant new investment has come in. Some Western businessmen have packed up and gone home.

The Call for Sanctions

And now, we've reached a critical juncture. Many in Congress and some in Europe are clamoring for sweeping sanctions against South Africa. The Prime Minister of Great Britain has denounced punitive sanctions as "immoral" and "utterly repugnant." Well, let me tell you why we believe Mrs. Thatcher is right.

The primary victims of an economic boycott of South Africa would be the very people we seek to help. Most of the workers who would lose jobs because of sanctions would be black workers. We do not believe the way to help the people of South Africa is to cripple the economy upon which they and their families depend for survival.

Alan Paton, South Africa's great writer, for years the conscience of his country, has declared himself emphatically: "I am totally opposed to disinvestment," he says. "It is primarily for a moral reason. Those who will pay most grievously for disinvestment will be the black workers of South Africa. I take very seriously the teachings of the gospels. In particular, the parables about giving drink to the thirsty and food to the hungry. I will not help to cause any such suffering to any black person." Nor will we.

Looking at a map, southern Africa is a single economic unit tied together by rails and roads. Zaire and its southern mining region depends upon South Africa for three-fourths of its food and petroleum. More than half the electric power that drives the capital of Mozambique comes from South Africa. Over one-third of the exports from Zambia and 65% of the exports of Zimbabwe leave the continent through South African ports.

The mines of South Africa employ 13,000 workers from Swaziland, 19,000 from Botswana, 50,000 from Mozambique, and 110,000 from the tiny, landlocked country of Lesotho. Shut down these productive mines with sanctions, and you have forced black mine workers out of their jobs and forced their families back in their home countries into destitution. I don't believe the American people want to do something like that. As one African leader remarked recently, "Southern Africa is like a zebra. If the white parts are injured, the black parts will die too."

Well, Western nations have poured billions in foreign aid and investment loans into southern Africa. Does it make sense to aid these countries with one hand and with the other to smash the

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industrial engine upon which their future depends?

Wherever blacks seek equal opportunity, higher wages, and better working conditions, their strongest allies are the American, British, French, German, and Dutch businessmen who bring to South Africa ideas of social justice formed in their own countries.

If disinvestment is mandated, these progressive Western forces will depart and South African proprietors will inherit, at fire sale prices, their farms and factories and plants and mines. And how would this end apartheid?

Our own experience teaches us that racial progress comes swiftest and easiest not during economic depression but in times of prosperity and growth. Our own history teaches us that capitalism is the natural enemy of such feudal institutions as apartheid.

Violence and Change

Nevertheless, we share the outrage Americans have come to feel. Night after night, week after week, television has brought us reports of violence by South African security forces, bringing injury and death to peaceful demonstrators and innocent bystanders. More recently, we read of violent attacks by blacks against blacks. Then, there is the calculated terror by elements of the African National Congress: the mining of roads, the bombings of public places, designed to bring about further repression—the imposition of martial law and eventually creating the conditions for racial war.

The most common method of terror is the so-called necklace. In this barbaric way of reprisal, a tire is filled with kerosene or gasoline, placed around the neck of an alleged "collaborator," and ignited. The victim may be a black policeman, a teacher, a soldier, a civil servant. It makes no difference. The atrocity is designed to terrorize blacks into ending all racial cooperation and to polarize South Africa as prelude to a final, climactic struggle for power.

In defending their society and people, the South African Government has a right and responsibility to maintain order in the face of terrorists. But by its tactics, the government is only accelerating the descent into bloodletting. Moderates are being trapped between the intimidation of radical youths and countergangs of vigilantes.

And the government's state of emergency next went beyond the law of necessity. It, too, went outside the law by sweeping up thousands of students, civic leaders, church leaders, and labor leaders, thereby contributing to further radicalization. Such repressive measures will bring South Africa neither peace nor security.

It's a tragedy that most Americans only see or read about the dead and injured in South Africa—from terrorism, violence, and repression. For behind the terrible television pictures lies another truth: South Africa is a complex and diverse society in a state of transition. More and more South Africans have come to recognize that change is essential for survival. The realization has come hard and late; but the realization has finally come to Pretoria that apartheid belongs to the past.

In recent years, there's been a dramatic change. Black workers have been permitted to unionize, bargain collectively, and build the strongest free trade union movement in all of Africa. The infamous pass laws have been ended, as have many of the laws denying blacks the right to live, work, and own property in South Africa's cities. Citizenship, wrongly stripped away, has been restored to nearly 6 million blacks. Segregation in universities and public facilities is being set aside. Social apartheid laws prohibiting interracial sex and marriage have been struck down. It is because State President Botha has presided over these reforms that extremists have denounced him as a traitor.

We must remember, as the British historian Paul Johnson reminds us, that South Africa is an African country as well as a Western country. And reviewing the history of that continent in the quarter century since independence, historian Johnson does not see South Africa as a failure: ". . .only in South Africa," he writes, "have the real incomes of blacks risen very substantially. . . . In mining, black wages have tripled in real terms in the last decade. . . . South Africa is the. . . only African country to produce a large black middle class. Almost certainly," he adds, "there are now more black women professionals in South Africa than in the whole of the rest of Africa put together."

Despite apartheid, tens of thousands of black Africans migrate into South Africa from neighboring countries to escape poverty and take advantage of the opportunities in an economy that produces nearly a third of the income in all of sub-Saharan Africa.

It's tragic that in the current crisis social and economic progress has been arrested. And, yet, in contemporary South Africa—before the state of emergency—there was a broad measure of freedom of speech, of the press, and of religion there. Indeed, it's hard to think of a single country in the Soviet bloc—or many in the United Nations—where political critics have the same freedom to be heard as did outspoken critics of the South African Government.

But, by Western standards, South Africa still falls short, terribly short, on the scales of economic and social justice. South Africa's actions to dismantle apartheid must not end now. The state of emergency must be lifted. There must be an opening of the political process. That the black people of South Africa should have a voice in their own governance is an idea whose time has come. There can be no turning back. In the multiracial society that is South Africa, no single race can monopolize the reins of political power.

Black churches, black unions, and, indeed, genuine black nationalists have a legitimate role to play in the future of their country. But the South African Government is under no obligation to negotiate the future of the country with any organization that proclaims a goal of creating a communist state and uses terrorist tactics and violence to achieve it.

U.S. Ideals and Strategic Interests

Many Americans, understandably, ask: given the racial violence, the hatred, why not wash our hands and walk away from that tragic continent and bleeding country? Well, the answer is: we cannot.

In southern Africa, our national ideals and strategic interests come together. South Africa matters because we believe that all men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with unalienable rights. South Africa matters because of who we are. One of eight Americans can trace his ancestry to Africa.

Strategically, this is one of the most vital regions of the world. Around the Cape of Good Hope passes the oil of the Persian Gulf, which is indispensable to the industrial economies of Western Europe. Southern Africa and South Africa are repository of many of the vital minerals—vanadium, manganese, chromium, platinum—for which the West has no other secure source of supply.

The Soviet Union is not unaware of the stakes. A decade ago, using an army of Cuban mercenaries provided by Fidel Castro, Moscow installed a client regime in Angola. Today, the Soviet Union is providing that regime with the weapons to attack UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola]—a black liberation movement which seeks for Angolans the same right to be represented in their government that

black South Africans seek for themselves.

Apartheid threatens our vital interests in southern Africa, because it's drawing neighboring states into the vortex of violence. Repeatedly, within the last 18 months, South African forces have struck into neighboring states. I repeat our condemnation of such behavior. Also, the Soviet-armed guerrillas of the African National Congress—operating both within South Africa and from some neighboring countries—have embarked upon new acts of terrorism inside South Africa. I also condemn that behavior.

But South Africa cannot shift the blame for these problems onto neighboring states, especially when those neighbors take steps to stop guerrilla actions from being mounted from their own territory.

If this rising hostility in southern Africa—between Pretoria and the front-line states—explodes, the Soviet Union will be the main beneficiary. And the critical ocean corridor of South Africa and the strategic minerals of the region would be at risk. Thus, it would be a historic act of folly for the United States and the West—out of anguish and frustration and anger—to write off South Africa.

Key to the Future

Ultimately, however, the fate of South Africa will be decided there, not here. We Americans stand ready to help. But whether South Africa emerges democratic and free or takes a course leading to a downward spiral of poverty and repression will finally be their choice, not ours.

The key to the future lies with the South African Government. As I urge Western nations to maintain communication and involvement in South Africa, I urge Mr. Botha not to retreat into the *laager*, not to cut off contact with the West. Americans and South Africans have never been enemies, and we understand the apprehension and fear and concern of all of your people. But an end to apartheid does not necessarily mean an end to the social, economic, and physical security of the white people in this country they love and have sacrificed so much to build.

To the black, "colored," and Asian peoples of South Africa, too long treated as second- and third-class subjects, I can only say: in your hopes for freedom, social justice, and self-determination, you have a friend and ally in the United States. Maintain your hopes for peace and reconciliation, and we will do our part to keep that road open.

We understand that behind the rage and resentment in the townships is the memory of real injustices inflicted upon generations of South Africans. Those to whom evil is done, the poet wrote, often do evil in return.

But if the people of South Africa are to have a future in a free country where the rights of all are respected, the desire for retribution will have to be set aside. Otherwise, the future will be lost in a bloody quarrel over the past.

Components for Progress Toward Peace

It would be an act of arrogance to insist that uniquely American ideas and institutions, rooted in our own history and traditions, be transplanted to South African soil. Solutions to South Africa's political crisis must come from South Africans themselves. Black and white, "colored" and Asian, they have their own traditions. But let me outline what we believe are necessary components of progress toward political peace.

First, a timetable for elimination of apartheid laws should be set.

Second, all political prisoners should be released.

Third, Nelson Mandela should be released—to participate in the country's political process.

Fourth, black political movements should be unbanned.

Fifth, both the government and its opponents should begin a dialogue about constructing a political system that rests upon the consent of the governed—where the rights of majorities and minorities, and individuals are protected by law. And the dialogue should be initiated by those with power and authority—the South African Government itself.

Sixth, if postapartheid South Africa is to remain the economic locomotive of southern Africa, its strong and developed economy must not be crippled. And, therefore, I urge the Congress—and the countries of Western Europe—to resist this emotional clamor for punitive sanctions.

If Congress imposes sanctions, it would destory America's flexibility, discard our diplomatic leverage, and deepen the crisis. To make a difference, Americans—who are a force for decency and progress in the world—must remain involved. We must stay and work, not cut and run.

It should be our policy to build in South Africa, not to bring down. Too often in the past, we Americans—acting out of anger and frustration and impatience—have turned our backs on flawed regimes, only to see disaster follow.

Those who tell us the moral thing to do is to embargo the South African economy and write off South Africa should tell us exactly what they believe will rise in its place. What foreign power would fill the vacuum if South Africa's ties with the West are broken?

The Need for Coordination

To be effective, however, our policy must be coordinated with our key Western allies and with the front-line states in southern Africa. These countries have the greatest concern and potential leverage on the situation in South Africa. I intend to pursue the following steps.

• Secretary Shultz has already begun intensive consultations with our Western allies—whose roots and presence in South Africa are greater than our own—on ways to encourage internal negotiations. We want the process to begin now, and we want open channels to all the principal parties. The key nations of the West must act in concert. And, together, we can make the difference.

We fully support the current efforts of the British Government to revive hopes for negotiations. Foreign Secretary Howe's visits with South Africa's leader this week will be of particular significance.

• And second, I urge the leaders of the region to join us in seeking a future South Africa where countries live in peace and cooperation. South Africa is the nation where the industrial revolution first came to Africa; its economy is a mighty engine that could pull southern Africa into a prosperous future. The other nations of southern Africa—from Kinshasa to the Cape—are rich in natural resources and human resources.

• Third, I have directed Secretary Shultz and AID [Agency for International Development] Administrator McPherson to undertake a study of America's assistance role in southern Africa to determine what needs to be done and what can be done to expand the trade, private investment, and transport prospects of southern Africa's landlocked nations. In the past 5 years, we have provided almost $1 billion in assistance to South Africa's neighbors. And this year we hope to provide an additional $45 million to black South Africans.

We're determined to remain involved, diplomatically and economically, with all the states of southern Africa that wish constructive relations with the United States.

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This Administration is not only against broad economic sanctions and against apartheid; we are for a new South Africa, a new nation where all that has been built up over generations is not destroyed, a new society where participation in the social, cultural, and political life is open to all people—a new South Africa that comes home to the family of free nations where it belongs.

To achieve that, we need not a Western withdrawal but deeper involvement by the Western business community, as agents of change and progress and growth. The international business community needs not only to be supported in South Africa but energized. We'll be at work on that task. If we wish to foster the process of transformation, one of the best vehicles for change is through the involvement of black South Africans in business, job-related activities, and labor unions.

But the vision of a better life cannot be realized so long as apartheid endures and instability reigns in South Africa. If the peoples of southern Africa are to prosper, leaders and peoples of the region—of all races—will have to elevate their common interests above their ethnic divisions.

We and our allies cannot dictate to the government of a sovereign nation. Nor should we try. But we can offer to help find a solution that is fair to all the people of South Africa. We can volunteer to stand by and help bring about dialogue between leaders of the various factions and groups that make up the population of South Africa. We can counsel and advise and make it plain to all that we are there as friends of all the people of South Africa.

In that tormented land, the window remains open for peaceful change. For how long, we know not. But we in the West, privileged and prosperous and free, must not be the ones to slam it shut. Now is a time for healing. The people of South Africa, of all races, deserve a chance to build a better future. And we must not deny or destory that chance.■

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